

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 KABUL 000378

SIPDIS

STATE FOR SA/FO (AMB MQUINN), SA/A, S/CR, SA/PAB, S/CT,
EUR/RPM
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR AID/ANE, AID/DCHA/DG
NSC FOR AHARRIMAN, KAMEND
OSD FOR BREZINSKI
CENTCOM FOR CG CFC-A, CG CJTF-76, POLAD
REL NATO/AUST/NZ/ISAF

SENSITIVE

E.O. 12958 N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PTER](#) [SNAR](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: PRT/HELMAND PROVINCIAL COUNCIL MOVING FORWARD

1.(SBU)SUMMARY: The Helmand Provincial Council (PC) has been active since getting organized in late November. PC PC members have participated in a number of public events in Lashkar Gah (the provincial capital) and outlying districts. It is also meeting weekly with Helmands new governor to discuss pertinent issues. The governor and the PC appear willing to cooperate to improve governance. The PC has an office in the governors compound where it has met with many citizens to hear their concerns (primarily security and government corruption). The PC would like to be an active participant with the PRT in delivering humanitarian and/or reconstruction assistance. END SUMMARY.

2. (SBU)GETTING KNOWN: PRT POLOFF and the incoming UK PRT Commander met with the PCs Deputy Chairman, Haji Qurban Ali Urozgani, to discuss PC activities since mid-December. During that timeframe, members of the PC have engaged in a number of trips and activities to become better known. Several members traveled to Baghni, in the far north of Helmand. Another group went to Naw Zad. Both these trips involved PRT-related activities in districts that have had their share of security incidents.

3.(SBU)In addition to the trips, the PC has been engaged in a number of key provincial meetings and activities in and around Lashkar Gah. These include: (1) meeting parliamentarians; (2) conducting interviews on a local radio station; (3) discussing poppy eradication with Poppy Elimination Program (PEP) team members; (4) meeting the DIAG committee on approaches for encouraging disarmament; and (5) establishing a weekly dialogue with Governor Daoud. In addition, PC members participated in other PRT activities, including the handover of supplies for the agricultural school and the groundbreaking for a new madrassa (religious school).

4.(SBU)GOOD START WITH THE GOVERNOR: Urozgani said that the PC has developed a positive relationship with Helmands new governor, Engineer Daoud. The PC and the governor meet weekly; more often if necessary. Separately, Governor Daoud said that he fully supported the PC. He asked the PC to look at provincial government departments and suggest changes. The governor said that he has asked for PC input in developing a list of good candidates for provincial government offices.

5.(SBU)WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING: Perhaps not surprisingly, Urozgani said that many citizens whom the PC meets are expressing concern about security and government corruption. Many people generally support the government, he added, but are disappointed with its lack of responsiveness to their problems. They are expressing frustration with the need to pay bribes to get anything done.

6.(SBU)PC CONCERNED ABOUT OPIUM: The PC is also concerned about the opium issue. Urozgani said that, while he was not speaking for the PC, he discussed opium eradication with PEP team members. He told them that the situation is very complex. The fact that ACM elements are coercing poor farmers into cultivating poppy further complicates the problem. Urozgani said that he supports poppy eradication, but on a step by step basis, to avoid impoverishing the poor farmers. He suggested that an effective method would be to start by eradicating poppy on land owned by government and elected officials. Another step would be to eradicate poppy on land currently occupied illegally. This would add credibility to the governments eradication efforts. Acknowledging that the provincial police are corrupt, Urozgani suggested an elite, non-corrupted law enforcement entity responsible for

eradication. (Note: Eradication in Helmand has often turned into a police extortion campaign against small farmers, who are compelled to pay bribes to avoid eradication and/or jailing. End Note).

7.(SBU)KEEP US IN MIND: Urozgani said that the PC would like to continue its cooperative relationship with the PRT. To that end, he suggested that the PRT find ways to include the PC in humanitarian or reconstruction projects. He said e said that this will enhance the PCs credibility.

8.(SBU)COMMENT: Considering the vagueness of the PCs role and responsibilities, it is off to a positive start. As its members become more visible at public events and meet more citizens, the PC is likely to gain additional credibility. Over the long run, maintaining this credibility will depend on citizens perceptions that the PC can serve as a conduit for addressing their concerns. END COMMENT.

9.(SBU)Dushanbe minimize considered.

NORLAND

RLAND